

VZCZCXRO3894

RR RUEHBZ RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHSB #0067/01 0330949

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

R 020949Z FEB 10 ZDK

FM AMEMBASSY HARARE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5360

INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE

RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 3291

RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 3402

RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1825

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2659

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000067

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR BRIAN WALCH

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR MICHELLE GAVIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2020

TAGS: PREL PGOV ZI

SUBJECT: AN MDC SENATORS'S VIEW OF TSVANGIRAI AND THE MDC

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CHARLES A. RAY FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) MDC Senator Obert Gutu shared his views January 30 on Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, the MDC-T, and the current political situation. Gutu knows Tsvangirai, Minister of Finance Tendai Biti, and other top MDC-T officials well, but he is not an MDC-T insider. He is from Masvingo. His constituency in the Senate covers approximately the same Harare areas as does Biti's in the House of Assembly.

¶2. (C) Asked about Tsvangirai's qualities as a leader, Gutu said the prime minister was humble and tolerant, not vindictive like Robert Mugabe. These qualities in large part accounted for his widespread popularity. On the negative side, he was indecisive and inconsistent. Gutu pointed out that a couple of weeks ago, Tsvangirai had said Zimbabwe would not be ready for elections in the near-term because of the residue of 2008 election violence and the inadequacy of institutions. But at Davos last week, Tsvangirai said he would press for elections in 2011. Gutu also stated that Tsvangirai had a tendency to listen to the wrong people. He pointed to Ian Makone, Tsvangirai's chief of staff, and Makone's wife, Theresa, who is the Minister of Public Works. He opined that neither was a good strategist, and that the Office of the Prime Minister was weak due to Ian Makone's lack of leadership.

¶3. (C) We asked Gutu why the MDC-T had not taken a strong public stance on the Marange diamond fields where it appears ZANU-PF insiders are illegally profiting. Gutu said the situation was troubling, but he was not part of MDC-T strategy on the issue. He said MDC-T parliamentarians were furious when MDC-T Deputy Minister of Mines Murisi Zwizwai, at Kimberley Process meetings in Namibia, denied violence at Marange and had demanded his dismissal. Tsvangirai, according to Gutu, promised to speak with Zwizwai and the matter was dropped. Gutu noted that Zwizwai and Tsvangirai are cousins and said this was another example of friendship getting in the way of governing.

¶4. (C) MDC-T as a party, according to Gutu, is weak. Its most capable leaders are in government, and the party has been neglected. Many experienced MDC-T members declined to run for Parliament in the March 2008 elections fearing that their candidacies would be futile and perhaps dangerous. Those who ended up running and winning in many cases were inexperienced and unqualified.

¶5. (C) Gutu said he was aware of allegations of corruption

within the MDC-T. He had no knowledge of corrupt ministers, but said local councils were a concern. Many councilors had been elected for the first time in March 2008 and were trying to help themselves to the spoils of office.

¶6. (C) With regard to the constitutional process, Gutu said that local traditional chiefs had been co-opted by ZANU-PF and were using food distribution and agricultural inputs to secure support for ZANU-PF positions when parliamentary outreach teams visit their areas. He said the World Food Outreach teams visit their areas. He said the World Food Program and other donor organizations had made food distributions in December. But people were still hungry and ZANU-PF had food and agricultural inputs such as fertilizer to entice them to meetings to secure their support in the constitutional process. Gutu speculated ZANU-PF had obtained money for food and inputs from the sale of Marange diamonds.

¶7. (C) Gutu said there were divisions within the MDC-T on whether to push for early elections. Some of the leadership was frustrated with progress on the Global Political Agreement and wanted an early election strategy. But many MPs, elected for the first time, were reluctant to stand for reelection before necessary. Gutu said he was concerned about early elections since the ZANU-PF machinery of violence was in place and could be turned on at any time.

COMMENT and BIO NOTE

¶8. (C) Gutu's comments about the MDC-T ring true; he perhaps feels free to make them as he is not an MDC-T insider. Gutu is a successful lawyer (University of Zimbabwe law school)

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who first entered politics when he ran for Senate in March 2008. He 47 years old and is married with four daughters. The eldest graduated from Florida International University last year. One is a university student in Brisbane, one is studying in Cape Town, and the youngest is in high school in Harare. END COMMENT AND BIO NOTE.

RAY